

words. thus, evelyn could probably polish off death in venice in about two minutes, maybe, on a particularly robust day, a minute and a half.

the death of ivan ilych — a trifle longer perhaps — let's give her three whole minutes so that she doesn't feel rushed.

the metamorphosis? i doubt she'd enjoy that one much anyway. she might not make it all of the way through. maybe, she'd just toss it on the dust bin about seven seconds into it.

i'm really sorry evelyn never took a course from us. i could have assigned her every great novella ever written and she could have breezed through them with plenty of time left over for pitchers of beer at the 49er tavern, where she could have shared with us her store of profound insights.

THE MORE I READ, THE MORE I WRITE

my one reservation in taking on a graduate seminar in the american renaissance was that the amount of re-reading it would require would interfere with the writing i had planned for the summer. i soon discovered what i should have known from experience: walden alone had me filling up my pockets with poems.

WHEN I ADMIT THIS TO MY DAUGHTER, SHE SHAKES HER HEAD AND SAYS, "YOU'RE AMAZING."

i get a call from my daughter's french teacher asking that she call her about a special advanced placement review session,

so i dial her pager and sit by the phone hoping she calls back right away, as i have to rush off in five minutes to pick up her younger brother.

when the phone rings almost immediately, i'm so happy that i snatch it up and say, "hi, sweetheart!"

i get a kind of grouching and grumbling
from the other end of the line.
"hello?" i say; "anybody there?"

"mr. locklin," the voice announces,
"this is jim w., your roofing contractor."

TACO DUMBBELL

i'm already notorious with my kids
for driving up to the window of mc donald's
paying,
and immediately driving off without the food.

this happens with embarrassing frequency.

but today i outdid myself.

my son and i spent an interminable wait
in the drive-through line at taco bell.
but when i finally got to the microphone
i had something else on my mind
and i drove right past it.

"dad," my son asked, "did you forget to order?"

of course there was already another car
ordering at the microphone behind us.

it wasn't fun explaining all this
to the blank-faced teenage girl at the window.

R.B. KITAJ: WHO CAN BE HAPPY AND FREE?, 1990-93

do women feel that their clothes
are transparent to us?
do they really fear it,
as so many say they do?

do they, in their turn,
think of our hidden penises?
do they think of them erect,
or do they think of taking them,
soft, in hand, and watching the power
they have to make them rise?

do we not feel this way
about our touching of their nipples,
our biting of their necks,
our breathing into their ears,
our reaching into their panties?